

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3552
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY
USMISSION USBERLIN PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 14751

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, PEPR, US, UR
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S SPEECH IN MINSK

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SUMMARY: BREZHNEV'S JUNE 25 SPEECH IN MINSK,
AWARDING THAT CITY AN ORDER OF LENIN, CONTAINED
VERY FEW REFERENCES TO THE UNITED STATES AND NONE
TO SALT OR TO AFRICA. BREZHNEV CRITICIZED U.S.
LEADERS (UNNAMED) REGARDING THE SSOD AND CONCURRENT
NATO MEETING IN WASHINGTON, AND REGARDING THEIR
PLAYING "THE CHINA CARD". BREZHNEV SPENT MUCH

MORE TIME ON MBFR AND THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN EUROPE. JUDGING FROM THIS SPEECH, THE SOVIETS ARE CONTINUING THEIR SHARP PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE U.S., BUT WILL ATTEMPT TO SEPARATE THE U.S. FROM ITS NATO ALLIES IN WHICH MIGHT BE CONSIDERED A SOVIET USE OF THE "EUROPEAN CARD." BREZHNEV'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND SPEAKING PERFORMANCE WERE, FOR HIM, RELATIVELY GOOD. END SUMMARY.

1. BREZHNEV, ACCOMPANIED BY DEFENSE MINISTER USTINOV, MADE A PREVIOUSLY UNANNOUNCED TRAIN TRIP TO MINSK JUNE 24, OSTENSIBLY TO AWARD THE CITY AN ORDER OF LENIN. LEONID IL'ICH SPENT JUNE 25 LAYING WREATHS; MEETING WITH LOCAL PARTY LEADERS, WHERE HE GAVE REPUBLIC FIRST SECRETARY MASHEROV A "HERO OF SOCIALIST LABOR" AWARD; THEN PRESENTING THE CITY ITS AWARD AT A LARGE, CEREMONIAL GATHERING. BREZHNEV DEPARTED MINSK FOR MOSCOW THE EVENING OF JUNE 25.

2. THE DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE SEEN VIA TASS AND FBIS THE FULL TEXT OF BREZHNEV'S FIFTY-MINUTE SPEECH. THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS STRUCK US AS NOTE-WORTHY:

--BREZHNEV'S REFERENCES TO THE U.S. WERE FEW,
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BUT THEY WERE SHARPLY NEGATIVE AND NOT DESIGNED TO MODERATE THE TONE OF THE CRITICISM OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS. INSTEAD, THE BRIEF COMMENTS ABOUT THE U.S. SEEMED TO SIGNAL THAT THE SOVIETS NOW WISH TO IGNORE, OR VIRTUALLY IGNORE, THE U.S., AT LEAST IN HIGH-LEVEL PUBLIC STATEMENTS. THIS DOWNPLAYING OF THE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP WAS ACCOMPANIED BY AN EMPHASIS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EUROPEAN ELEMENT IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY. IT ZPEARS TO BE BREZHNEV'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE PLAYING THEIR "EUROPEAN CARD."

--TO EMPHASIZE THIS, BREZHNEV SAID NOTHING ABOUT SALT AND GAVE INSTEAD DETAILED ATTENTION TO MBFR, WHERE HE CLAIMED THE EAST HAS MADE "BROAD, NEW PROPOSALS" WHICH CONSTITUTED A "REALISTIC OMPROMISE" IN WHICH THE EAST HAD GONE "MORE THAN HALF WAY." IN TYPICAL SOVIET FASHION, BREZHNEV TRIED TO PLACE THE BURDEN FOR MORE PROGRESS ON THE WEST BY DECLARING THAT AS A RESULT OF THE EASTERN PROPOSALS THE BASIS FOR AN AGREEMENT EXISTS IN MBFR, AND THAT ALL NOW "DEPENDS ON THE POLITICAL WILL OF THE

WEST."

--IN A CLEAR ATTEMPT TO SEPARATE THE PROBLEMS
WITH THE U.S. FROM THE EUROPEAN SITUATION,
BREZHNEV POINTEDLY AGREED WITH FRG CHANCELLOR
SCHMIDT'S STATEMENT THAT THE "IMPROVED POLITICAL
CLIMATE IN EUROPE" AS ONE OF THE "MOST IMPORTANT
PEACEFUL GAINS OF THE LAST DECADE." HE WENT ON TO
SAY THAT THIS WAS OF "PARTICULAR" IMPORTANCE "NOW
WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION (READ: U.S.-SOVIET

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY

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RELATIONS) IS AGAIN BECOMING MORE AGGRAVATED."

--HIS ONLY NEGATIVE COMMENT ABOUT THE EUROPEANS

CAME IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATO MEETINGS IN
WASHINGTON AND THE SSOD. HERE, AT THE BEGINNING OF
THE FOREIGN POLICY SECTION OF THE SPEECH, HE
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CRITICIZED THE "NATO COUNTRIES AND ABOVE ALL THE
U.S." FOR NOT SHOWING A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO
DISARMAMENT. THIS SINGLE, UNSPECIFIC SHOT WAS
MORE THAN COUNTERBALANCED BY THE POSITIVE LANGUAGE
USED LATER IN THE SPEECH. HE REFERRED TO RELATIONS
WITH THE FRG AS "AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF STABILITY
IN EUROPE" DESPITE "CERTAIN NEGATIVE MOMENTS", AND
MADE POSITIVE REFERENCES TO FRANCE, SWEDEN,
AUSTRIA, FINLAND AND TURKEY. WHEN COMBINED WITH
THE MBFR REFERENCES, THIS GIVES AN OVERALL
IMPRESSION OF SATISFACTION WITH THE EUROPEAN
SITUATION, IN DIRECT CONTRAST WITH THE U.S.
RELATIONSHIP.

--IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS COMMENTS ON THE MBFR
PROPOSALS OF THE EAST, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS
"CLEAR AND PRECISE", BREZHNEV LISTED TWO ELEMENTS
AS MOST IMPORTANT. THE FIRST WAS THE SOVIET
COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAW "THREE DIVISIONS WITH THEIR
MILITARY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING APPROXIMATELY ONE
THOUSAND TANKS." THE PHRASING OF BREZHNEV'S
SENTENCE SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT MOST OF THE TANKS
WITHDRAWN WILL COME FROM THE DIVISIONS WITHDRAWN
RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL AND GROUPS OF TANKS TAKEN
FROM OTHER UNITS OF SOVIET FORCES REMAINING IN
THE AREA. THE SECOND ELEMENT STRESSED WAS THE
IDEA OF "PARITY", WHICH IS EXPRESSED IN TERMS
OF "A SINGLE COMMON CEILING" FOR "EACH OF THE
GROUPINGS" IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

--BREZHNEV DID NOT FAIL TO TAKE NOTE OF THE
"CHINA CARD", AS HE OPENLY CALLED IT. HIS MENTION
OF THIS ELEMENT OF U.S. POLICY, WHILE IGNORING
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SO MANY OTHER ASPECTS, SERVED TO UNDERLINE THE
CONCERN WHICH THIS HAS CAUSED IN THE SOVIET LEADER-
SHIP. HOWEVER, HE DEALT WITH IT IN TRADITIONAL
FASHION, SIMPLY CALLED IT A "SHORTSIGHTED AND
DANGEROUS POLICY." THERE WAS NO THREAT OF SOVIET
COUNTER-ACTION EXPLICIT OR IMPLIED. NOR WAS

ANY SPECIFIC U.S. LEADER CITED.

3. BREZHNEV'S PERFORMANCE. BREZHNEV'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND SPEAKING PERFORMANCE WERE AS GOOD AS WE HAVE RECENTLY OBSERVED. HE DELIVERED THE FIFTY-MINUTE AWARD SPEECH AT A RELATIVELY, NORMAL SPEED. HIS ENUNCIATION WAS ABOVE HIS RECENT PAR, ALTHOUGH HE FLUFFED A FEW WORDS, AND THE AUDIO RECORDING CLEARLY WAS EDITED IN AT LEAST THREE OR FOUR PLACES. BREZHNEV'S ENERGY LEVEL SEEMED GOOD THROUGHOUT, AND NOTICEABLY PICKED UP WHEN HE CAME TO THE FOREIGN POLICY SECTION OF THE ADDRESS.

4. THERE WERE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL INDICATIONS OF BREZHNEV'S FRAILITY:

--ALEKSANDROV AND TWO OTHER PERSONAL AIDES WERE SEATED JUST BEHIND LEONID IL'ICH ON THE DIAS, AS IF TO BE READY TO ASSIST HIM;

--DUE TO SOME MIX-UP, BREZHNEV ALMOST ENDED HIS SPEECH WITHOUT MAKING THE AWARD TO MINSK; JUST AS HE BEGAN TO WIND UP HIS ADDRESS, SOMEONE HANDED HIM A PAGE OR TWO --EITHER DUPLICATES THAT BREZHNEV HAD SKIPPED, OR PAGES MISSING OR

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OUT OF ORDER IN BREZHNEV'S COPY--OBVIOUSLY
CONTAINING THE AWARD PORTION OF THE SPEECH
(THIS EPISODE WAS SHOWN ON THE TV SPECIAL OF
THE SPEECH, BUT WAS EDITED OUT OF THE "VREMYA"
TV NEWS COVERAGE LATER JUNE 25);

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--DESPITE HIS MANY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AT THIS SORT
OF THING, BREZHNEV FAILED TO PIN THE MEDAL CORRECTLY
ON THE CITY FLAG; ONE OF THE MINSK OFFICIALS
FINALLY HAD TO DO THE JOB (THIS EPISODE WAS ALSO
EDITED FROM THE VIDEO TAPE). TOON

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